

Vimuttimagga

The ***Vimuttimagga*** ("Path of Freedom") is a Buddhist practice manual, traditionally attributed to the Arahant Upatissa (c. 1st or 2nd century^[1]). It was translated into Chinese in the sixth century as the *Jietuo dao lun* 解脱道論 by Sanghapala. The original text (possibly Pali or Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit) is no longer extant, but the work has survived in Chinese. The book was probably written in India and then later brought to Sri Lanka.^[1] Some doctrines of the *Vimuttimagga* have been associated with those attributed to the Abhayagiri monastery by Dhammapāla, but this has been disputed in recent scholarship.^{[2][3]}

Contents

The *Vimuttimagga* recommends various meditation practices such as Anapanasati, Kasina meditation and Buddha-anussati - recollection of the virtues of the Buddha. Its chapters are (based on the translation by Ehara, Soma & Kheminda):

1. Introductory Discourse (referencing the three trainings and ultimate freedom)^[4]
2. On Distinguishing Virtue
3. On Austerities
4. On Distinguishing Concentration
5. On Approaching a Good Friend
6. The Distinguishing of Behavior
7. The Distinguishing of the Subjects of Meditation
8. Entrance into the Subject of Meditation
9. The Five Forms of Higher Knowledge
10. On Distinguishing Wisdom
11. The Five Methods (aggregates, sense organs, elements, conditioned arising, truth)
12. On Discerning Truth

Relationship to the *Visuddhimagga*

The *Vimuttimagga* bears a striking similarity to the *Visuddhimagga* by Buddhagosa, and it is highly probable that it had an influence on Buddhagosa.^[5] While the *Visuddhimagga* is a much longer work, both texts differ on several points. According to Bhikkhu Analayo, the Chinese version of the *Vimuttimagga* states that ascetic practices (dhutanga) can be unwholesome and wholesome while the *Visuddhimagga* denies that they can be unwholesome, although he notes that the Tibetan *Vimuktimārga* classifies ascetic practices as "wholesome".^[6] A similar difference can be seen with regards to concentration (samādhi) which the *Vimuttimagga* states can be wholesome or unwholesome (micchā samādhi/邪定) while the *Visuddhimagga* disagrees that it can be unwholesome.^[7] Another major difference is in the scheme of the progress of insight, which the *Vimuttimagga* arranges based on the four noble truths and the *Visuddhimagga* arranges based on the seven purifications which stem from the Rathavināta-sutta.^[8]

Minor differences can also be seen in the particular schemes of practice. Upatissa gives four categories of Śīla while Buddhagosa gives five. Upatissa gives four ways of cultivating Anapanasati, while Buddhagosa gives eight.^[5] In addition, the *Visuddhimagga* identifies forty subjects of meditation (kammatthana) while the *Vimuttimagga* identifies thirty-eight.^[9]

See also

- [Buddhaghosa](#)
- [Visuddhimagga](#)
- [Patisambhidamagga](#)
- [Samatha](#)
- [Vipassana](#)

Notes

1. [Bapat 1937](#), p. lv.
2. [Analayo 2009](#), pp. 5-6.
3. [Crosby 1999](#), pp. 503-550.
4. This chapter's introductory stanza in Pali is: "'Sīlaṃ samādhi paññā ca, vimutti ca anuttarā; Anubuddhā ime dhammā, gotamena yasassinā.'" This verse can be found in both the [Mahāparinibbāna Sutta \(DN 16\)](#) and the [Anubuddha Sutta \(AN 4.1\)](#). [Vajira & Story \(1998\)](#) translate this verse as: "Virtue, concentration, wisdom, and emancipation unsurpassed — These are the principles realized by Gotama the renowned...."
5. [Bapat 1937](#), p. lvii.
6. [Analayo 2009](#), p. 4.
7. [Analayo 2009](#), pp. 11-12.
8. [Analayo 2009](#), pp. 9.
9. [Bapat 1937](#), p. xxx.

References

- [Analayo, Bhikkhu \(2009\), "The Treatise on the Path to Liberation \(解脫道論\) and the Visuddhimagga" \(https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/treatise-path-liberation.pdf\) \(PDF\), *Fuyan Buddhist Studies* \(4\), ISSN 2070-0512 \(https://www.worldcat.org/issn/2070-0512\)](#)
- [Bapat, P.V. \(1937\), *Vimuttimagga and Visuddhimagga - A Comparative Study* \(https://archive.org/details/Vimuttimagga.and.Visuddhimagga.A.comparative.Study.P.V.Bapat\)](#)
- [Crosby, Kate \(1999\), "History versus Modern Myth: The Abhayagirivihāra, the Vimuttimagga and Yogāvacara Meditation", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, **27** – via https://www.scribd.com/document/94761137/The-Abhayagirivihara-The-Vimuttimagga-and-Yogavacara-Meditation-Kate-Crosby](#)
- [Vajira, Sister; Story, Francis \(1998\), *Maha-parinibbana Sutta: Last Days of the Buddha \(DN 16\)* \(http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html\), Access to Insight, retrieved 12 October 2014](#)

External links

English translations

- [The Path Of Freedom \(Vimuttimagga\) of Arahant Upatissa \(https://archive.org/details/ArahantUpatissa-Vimuttimagga-PathOfFreedom.pdf\)](#) Translated from the Chinese by Rev. N. R. M. Ehara, Soma Thera, Kheminda Thera. Buddhist Publication Society. Kandy, Ceylon

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